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Policy Implications

It is in accord with the best U.S. tradition to endeavor to protect and assist those fleeing from persecution. Under present conditions, and with due regard for the effects of such action on the diplomatic and political interests of the United States, it is also in the important interests of national security that defectors be welcomed and assisted in obtaining a degree of personal and economic security and made to feel that there is a place for them in a free society.

It has likewise been our policy that any person, particularly one who has sought asylum here, has the right to leave of his own free will, provided the national interest of the country is not adversely affected. In pursuance thereof, certain members of the Tuspae crew were allowed to enter this country. Later, five members were permitted to depart from this country after they made statements that they wanted to leave and after it was determined that their departure was not against the national interest of this country.

The Tuspae seamen originally came to this country because the United States maintains the right of asylum for political refugees as a fundamental principle. Even though admittance into the United States may be selective, this country is vigorously pursuing the policy of not turning back escapees and of insuring the proper handling of them from countries under Communist control. Such a policy is in line with the long humanitarian history of

the United States in assisting those in need. Under today's conditions of the Iron Curtain it serves a political purpose of demonstrating to the captive peoples of Eastern Europe that America is interested in their welfare and is showing its high regard for them through assistance to their nationals who can be reached. Concrete meaning of United States interest in the East European refugees is demonstrated by operations of the United States Escapee Program. Additionally, the United States contributes generously to and participates in the two large international programs for assistance to refugees, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Inter-Governmental Committee for European Migration.

The question did arise as to whether or not there was evidence to show, over and above their own statements, that their departure from the United States was under duress by a foreign power. It was concluded that there was not sufficient basis for such a finding and therefore the occasion did not arise for taking steps to prevent their departure from the United States.

A question also arises as to whether it was proper for a Soviet representative to be present at an interview of the seamen conducted at the airport by the Immigration and Naturalization Service at the time of their departure. The Soviet representative identified himself as an official of that government and consequently, in accordance with established practice, he was permitted to be present during the interview. The fact that the Soviet Union chose to have a member of its Mission to the United Nations

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step forward and function as its representative on this occasion gives grounds for a serious protest by the U.S. for this misuse by the Soviet Union of its United Nations representatives. Embassy or Consular officials would have been the proper ones to use for this purpose and there was in fact available at Idlewild a Soviet Consular official. The U.S. Government is considering steps to take on this issue.

The U.S. acted entirely honorably and in accordance with established tradition and policy in this matter and in permitting these people to go as they pleased gave a further demonstration of the kind of freedom to which we are traditionally committed.